

Amillennialism

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[0:00] Last week, we kind of finished up an overview of the various views.

! Remember the names of those views? We have amillennialism, postmillennialism, we took them in this order, postmillennialism, pre-millennialism, and kind of the two branches of that.

I spent a little time last week because I felt like I needed to on the preterist view of eschatology and the two branches or flavors of that.

And we covered that last week. So we've kind of gone through all these various views. And again, I hope I didn't lose the ball out in the weeds.

And tonight, I'm going to pray for that and hope for that same thing because we're going to focus on amillennialism tonight. And so I hope it doesn't get too complicated.

[1:13] It is complicated for anyone who approaches these issues. But this will be valuable to you, I believe, so that we can kind of know where some of these various views are coming from.

And I will, when we're done here tonight, mention some of the weaknesses of the amillennial view because it's not mine. There are weaknesses with the pre-millennial view too as we'll get to that.

But we'll not be getting to that tonight. But I want to talk about the fundamental differences.

Fundamental differences of these views, various views.

If we could just identify what are the primary differences in all these views. I mean, where does that lie? Well, the first thing that you would have to say, since we are talking about millennial views, then the primary difference is in that millennium.

Not just what it is, but primarily the length of it. And, of course, you've heard me say that some look at the millennium as just simply a symbolic, lengthy period of time.

[2:29] It's not a thousand years per se, you know, in that sense, in that literal sense, but it's just symbolic of a lengthy period of time. And I would even add to that a lengthy, undetermined amount of time.

That is, you can't, and they can't, those who would hold to that can't go to the Bible and say, well, it's not a thousand years, it's actually this many years. It's indeterminate. All right, so that's one difference in the view, obviously.

I keep hitting the wrong button. Then there's the view that it's a literal 1,000 year period of time. All right, so you see, those are the basic fundamental differences between the two.

Second, the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth. The millennium is, or identifies, a time, period of time, whether you believe in a literal period of time or a symbolic period of time, but it represents primarily the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth.

Whether it's, and here's the idea, is it spiritual? You know, just a kind of a spiritual reign here on this earth?

[3:41] Or a physical reign, actual physical reign, where He comes and He sits upon the throne, and He physically reigns here on the earth for that period of time?

Or is it both, combination of both? Now, is it now? Is the millennium now? I mean, why are we in it right now?

These are the fundamental differences in these various views. Or is it future? Now or future? Or both now and future? All right, this just blesses your heart.

I can tell on your faces. You're going to use this for your devotional time tomorrow morning, I think, right? Third, the third difference is the relationship between Israel and the church.

And this is a big one. Really big one. In fact, I would go so far as to say, and this is just, you know, showing again my bias, that how you view Israel and the church is crucial.

[4:46] And it is one of the primary reasons why I'm premillennial, is because of Israel. Now, the relationship between Israel and the church, there are various views.

Is it a prophetic fulfillment of Israel? That is, the church today, is it just a prophetic fulfillment of God's plan with Israel?

That's one view. Is the church a replacement for Israel? That is, in that sense that God is through with Israel, there's no more Israel, now it's the church.

Is the church identical with Israel? There's really no difference. Or is the church absolutely distinct from Israel?

The church and Israel are not the same. I'd go for that fourth one. Alright, well, let's get back to that.

The role of Satan is a fundamental difference in the various views.

[5 : 55] When is he bound? When is he loosed? What can he do? What will he do? When he's loosed? And though I think I would probably label this as a lesser concern, but here lies one of the differences, fundamental difference.

The nature of the tribulation. And we'll spend quite a bit of time on the tribulation when we get especially to the premillennial view. Because it's just the premillennialists that speak anything about a literal tribulation and so forth.

So we'll talk about that. And so the nature of it. When is it? Literally? Figuratively? Who goes through it? These are not questions you need to answer right now.

I know some of you are going, I know who. Number six, how to interpret end times prophecies. This is very important. Preterism.

We've talked about that. That is, interpret end time prophecies as already done. All past.

Historicism. It's past and present.

[7 : 16] Mostly past. Maybe some of it's still present. Even some who approach it that way would say that maybe there are a few things that are future. But primarily it's all past and present.

Futurism, of course, all future. Alright? And what is the chronological order? I'm having a hard time with my tongue here tonight.

The number and timing of resurrections. Is there just one? General resurrection? Two?

Or more than two? You know, with several parts to the second resurrection? We'll talk about that.

The number and timing of Christ's comings.

That's the fundamental difference between all these views. The number and timing of judgments. Is there just one judgment at the end of all things?

[8 : 17] Or are there, you know, a series of judgments? Depending on the people being judged.

Method of biblical interpretation. And this is important.

Literal? Do we interpret, and I'm speaking specifically of biblical prophecy.

Those prophecies that are given to us in Scripture. Do we interpret them literally? Or figuratively?

That is, maybe they're allegorical.

Or symbolical. Or what's amazing to me, and I'll go ahead and interject this. It's amazing to me that there are a lot of scholars who are very intent on sound biblical interpretation until they get to eschatology.

And then, you know, we want to look at the text literally and find the literal meaning until they get to eschatology. And they say, well, that's just all symbolic. Kind of ridiculous.

[9 : 20] All right. Explanation of millennial views. And here's the one we're going to focus on tonight. Ah, millennialism. Ah, millennialism. And I put the graph back up there, and I didn't put it in your notes.

But here's the basic view. I'm not going to go back over that. But you see, you know, one of the main features, the millennium, is not literal. It's just this present age.

And so, in their view, we're in the millennium. And there's, you know, not really per se a distinct tribulation period.

There's tribulation all the way through, and it intensifies in the end. And then, you know, there's the apostasy and so forth. And so, that's basically the view.

Now, let's consider what they believe. And to some extent, why. Though I'll go ahead and tell you right now that it's not so much, in many of the various elements of this view, it's not so much the scriptures they choose, but the approach they take to interpreting them.

[10 : 36] Because you're going to see that the scriptures they use to support their view or the same scriptures all the other views use. It just depends on your approach to that particular scripture.

All right? The millennium. Here's what they believe. This period is symbolic of a relatively long but indeterminate period of time.

Now, I've already mentioned that, but that's view number one. I decided to insert a little quote from MacArthur. MacArthur's not an amillennialist, okay?

Here's what he said. One other category of theology starts with the alpha privative, that's the A, and labels itself as believing in something that does not exist. I just love that quote. And then he added, unless it's atheism.

Okay, now he's not saying that amillennialists are atheists. He's not saying that. He's just keying in on that alpha privative. So, you know, in fact, I also heard him say, in fact, there's a really excellent video, you can get it on YouTube, of his presentation at Shepard's Conference on this whole subject of amillennialism.

[11:49] And it's an excellent video. It's quite long. And some of it is quite technical. But he said, and he started out by asking his congregation or the group that gathered there, when's the last time you ever heard about an amillennialist prophecy conference?

You know, it just doesn't happen. Anyway, I thought I'd add that for your enjoyment. Some believe that the millennium is figurative of the church age.

I would say that probably most of them do. This is called the Augustinian view of amillennialism.

That's St. Augustine. And so here's basically what to say.

Christ is reigning over a spiritual Israel on a spiritualized throne of David. So Christ is reigning in his millennium, his kingdom, but he's doing it from heaven on the throne of David.

And so it's a spiritualized millennium or spiritualized reign. Remember I said that would be one approach, that the millennium is spiritualized.

[13:04] The saints, of course, the saints are still here. Saints on earth are presently reigning spiritually with Christ. So the kingdom exists here and it's Christ on his throne in the individual believer.

Now, to some point I would certainly agree with that. But that doesn't mean that that's the millennium. Alright? The kingdom is represented here today in the church, in the hearts of the believer.

That's where he rules and reigns. Okay? But that's not the millennium. Anyway, this is what they believe, the Augustinian view. And this will continue until the general resurrection, last judgment, final judgment, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

And if you remember that graph, that's at the end of the age. And there's no millennial kingdom that follows that where Christ and his church rule here on this planet. Then we go right on into the eternal state.

Alright? So, that's the Augustinian view. There is a Warfieldian view. Okay? That's B.B. Warfield, the darling of Princeton University back in the early 20th century.

[14:28] Some believe then it is symbolic, the millennium is symbolic of the, quote, intermediate state between a believer's death and the general resurrection. Now, what's that?

Well, there's just one general resurrection at the end of the age. The resurrection that we read about, it actually is implied in Revelation 20, verse 4, is a spiritual resurrection.

And then the first resurrection that is mentioned in verses 5 and 6 is physical. Alright, so that's the final resurrection. Now, I said, let me go back and explain this believer's death and the general resurrection.

The idea is that the millennial kingdom now, where Christ is reigning, is in heaven. And Christ is reigning with dead saints, all the martyred saints, primarily.

Well, there's various ideas about this, but this is basically, the millennium is not here, it's there. And Christ is reigning over believers who have gone on.

[15:40] Alright, I know this is exciting for you. The 1,000 years in Revelation 20, in the Warfieldian view, is symbolic of the reign of, I got ahead of myself, a reign of martyred saints now in heaven.

Okay? What's their view about the Antichrist? Well, most of them don't even believe in one.

But not all millenniums believe in a literal, personal Antichrist, in that literal sense. Some do, but not all.

And those who do believe a, quote, man of sin, that's 2 Thessalonians 2, 3, will arise in the last days and ascend to great political and evil spiritual power, eventually becoming a world ruler.

And that will be in the last days. Not any specific time period, not for any specific length of time. But in the last days, really right after the apostasy of the church, or coinciding with that, there will be this man of sin, or lawlessness, man of lawlessness that will arise and ascend to power.

[16:50] And he will persecute the church during the one and final eschatological conflict between good and evil, the Battle of Armageddon. Alright, so we believe in that final conflict. And this event will coincide with the period of apostasy.

The falling away, 2 Thessalonians 2, 3, at the end of the church age. And the Antichrist and all his followers will be destroyed with the brightness of Christ's coming, 1 Thessalonians 2, 8.

And that's just basically, basically the view. And all this taking place at the end of the age, end of history. Earthly history, because then after that, be the second coming, and we'll all be going. To the eternal state. The second coming of Christ. I believe the second coming will be a visible event in which Jesus bodily returns to earth, ending the reign of Antichrist and all history.

I didn't mean to capitalize Antichrist. Well, I guess I could. Alright, so, and when is this going to happen? At the end of the age. So there's not going to be a coming for Christ, for His church, no resurrection before some period of time.

[18:08] Everything is moving toward the end of the age. And then Christ will come, and Satan will be defeated, Antichrist will be defeated, and all of history will end, and that's it.

To many amillennialists, the second coming is the same as the rapture, though most would never use that term. Most would use that term. The resurrection of the dead.

There will be one resurrection, a general resurrection, of all the dead, righteous and wicked. John 5.28, one passage.

Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.

They see that. Interpret that as the one resurrection, the final resurrection. There will be one, excuse me, Acts 24.15.

[19:14] I have hope in God that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. Now, when we get into the other views, especially the pre-millennial view, because, quite frankly, there's not, pardon the expression, a spit of difference between amillennialism and post-millennialism.

In fact, I heard, again, I'll quote MacArthur. He said, the only difference is a, see, how did he put it, that post-millennialism is just optimistic amillennialism.

And I'll explain what he's getting at when we get to some of the weaknesses. All right. So, the resurrection of the dead.

Living believers of the coming Christ will be transformed and glorified. 1 Corinthians, Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

For the trump will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. All right. They place that at the absolute end of the age.

[20:27] Last days, which you find a number of references for in the Bible. Most amillennialists believe the last days refers to all time between the first and second comings of Jesus.

So, we're in the last days. Now, to an extent, I would agree with that. You know, we are in the last days. That is, you know, a period of time.

But, they don't see any specific sub-period of times, like a tribulation time, a millennium.

In fact, I think for most premillennialists, the last days include up to the coming of Christ for His church. As we approach the end of that time, this long period of time, in their view, the world will grow increasingly wicked and troubled.

And this will ultimately lead to a time of falling away, apostasy in the church, which will occur when Satan is loosed. And this is at the end of the age.

[21:37] That's why I said it's very pessimistic. Avillennialism is. Because we've got this long period of time, and we're in that age, and things are not getting better, they're getting worse.

And that's true. And it's just going to continue until it really intensifies for the end of the age, and there will be a great falling away, apostasy of the church, they would call that.

And then the Antichrist will come to power. Some key passages in the interpretation of these key passages.

And again, I'll just tell you that all these passages we're going to consider are the very same passages that the other views base their views on, including my view.

And one of them is Daniel 2, 37-45. You remember, even if you've not studied that passage, you probably are familiar with the vision that, or the dream, rather, that David interprets.

[22 : 43] And it's the statue. And the statue represents, he said in his interpretation, various kingdoms of the world. And what's amazing is, some of the kingdoms that are represented by the statue didn't even exist in Daniel's day.

It was all future for him. And so, this is a very key passage. And then we have the rock, of course, that comes and destroys all those kingdoms, and then the eternal kingdom takes its place. A tremendous point of prophecy. How do the amillennialists view this? Well, the gold head in the vision is Babylon.

No disputing that. That's explained in Scripture. Silver is the kingdom, next kingdom that became the world power, the Medo-Persians, the silver arms and chest.

The bronze is Greece, Grecian Empire, and Greek Empire, rather. And that includes, of course, kind of the torso, and even the thighs.

[23 : 52] And then, finally, and here's where they would diverge, their view diverges from the premillennial view, especially the dispensational premillennial view, is that the iron is the legs, and the clay, which are the feet, with the toes, that all that together represents the Roman Empire.

That's the Roman Empire. And so, the vision to that point is all past, isn't it? It's all past, because the Roman Empire is no more.

So, they don't then see the feet as prophetic of our day, and even future, as the premillennialists would.

And then, what about the rock, the stone, of course, that destroys the image, is Christ, who establishes His church. And that's the eternal kingdom that replaces all other kingdoms.

All right? Begs the question, has that happened yet? To the amillennialists, it has, because the rock represents Jesus, His first coming, and His victory at the cross, and establishment of the church.

[25 : 13] Then we have Daniel 9, 24-27, another very key prophecy for all the various views.

And we covered this, I think, the first session that we had, Daniel's 70 weeks of prophecy. His 70 weeks. And so, let me go through that again, and show you where they diverge in their interpretation of it.

This prophecy predicts, of course, 70 weeks of years. This is Daniel 9, 24-7. It prophesies 70 weeks of years. All right? Or 490 years.

That Bible says will be fulfilled concerning Israel. All right? So, 490 years comes in this prophecy. Begins in approximately 456 B.C.

with the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. So, we know how to mark the beginning of this 490 years. It's historical and biblical.

[26 : 18] The command came from the Persian king Artaxerxes, and we have records of that in Nehemiah. And so, we know when it all began.

Approximately 456 B.C. 69 weeks of the 70 are fulfilled. Now, here's where the amillennialist has a little different view than the premillennialist.

The 69 weeks were fulfilled when Jesus was baptized. Until the Messiah, the Prince, there shall be seven weeks, 49 years, and 62 weeks, 434 years, for a total of 483 years.

So, 483 years of the 490 were fulfilled when Jesus was baptized in this view. All right? That leaves seven years, obviously.

I put the math up there for you, you know, show you how good I am at math. And I'm really not. Had to get the calculator later out. Anyway, all right, so, that leaves seven years or the 70th week.

[27 : 31] All right, there's 70 weeks. Remember in the prophecy, according to Daniel's prophecy, the 70th week, 70 years, is divided into two equal parts.

Now, we're not going to go back and look at the Scripture, but you can look at that later and you'll see that that last week or that last 70 years divided into two equal parts. Here's what it says.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. That's the 70th week. But in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abomination shall be one who makes desolate.

That's verse 27 in that prophecy. All right, so, split into two parts, midweek. Now, according to the amillennial view, then the first half of the 70th week is the three and a half year period of Jesus' earthly ministry.

All right? And that's about how long his ministry lasted. I don't know that you could get it down to the day, but this is what they see.

[28:38] During this three and a half years of Jesus' ministry, the Gospel is preached to the Jews. And what did they do? They rejected it. They rejected the Gospel and they had Jesus crucified, which is, in their view, a fulfillment of verse 27.

Well, it is a fulfillment, verse 27. In the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. All right? So, the Jews rejected, Jesus was crucified, the temple, the veil was ripped, and the end of sacrifice and offerings.

Okay? After three and a half, midway through the seven years. The remaining portion of the prophecy in Daniel says this, On the wing of the abominations shall be one who makes desolate even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

That, in their view, refers to the judgments pronounced upon Israel for rejecting Christ, which, in their view, occurred 40 years later with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

I don't know how they justify the 40 years. But again, probably, because it's not that important to have this literal view here.

[30:01] So, there's a split. In fact, a lot of the argument against pre-millennialist, the dispensational brand, is that, you know, we see a separation between the 69th week and the 70th week.

In fact, we're still in that separation in a determined amount of time that the 7th week hasn't come because that 7th week or 7 years is the tribulation. And we'll get into that later.

But they see that all of this prophecy is fulfilled by 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem and it is primarily the judgment upon Israel for rejecting Christ.

The Olivet Discourse is another key passage. That's Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21. It's called that, why is it called the Olivet Discourse?

That's where it was given. The Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. in the amillennial view.

[31:12] Alright? So everything Jesus said, now there are some who say almost everything, pretty much everything, they would exclude a few things, but primarily the Olivet Discourse, all that Jesus said about the end of time, the end of days, the last things, all that has been fulfilled, was fulfilled in Jerusalem when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D.

Alright? Amillennialists point to Matthew 24, 34 as their proof text. Assuredly, I say to you, this, and they would emphasize, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place. Everything I've said, all these things, this generation will not pass away until they see these things. But I'll save what I think he means when we get to the premillennial view.

That is what he means by this generation. Alright? We'll leave it at that for now. When Jesus says, then shall the end come, verse 14, in fact, it's repeated a couple of other times in the chapter, this is a reference to the end of the Jewish system and old covenant age.

Alright? That's why amillennialists do not approach this from any kind of dispensational view. It's a covenant theology that drives their interpretation of end times.

[32:35] The book of Revelation, what about it? Is it of any worth to us? Most of the revelation was also fulfilled during the time of the early church.

And for some of them, that's why they would say it was very cryptic, apocalyptic kind of writing because it was kind of code to protect as the Revelation was, you know, the book of Revelation, the writing was to pass around for people to read.

You know, if it fell into the wrong hands, you know, it could go hard on the church. I don't think that's true at all, but some hold that view.

Amillennialists as well as postmillennialists do not take the book of Revelation literally. That doesn't mean they don't believe it's the Word of God, part of the Word of God.

They just, the interpretation of it rather than being literal where it means to be literal when it says this will be and this and such will be done, they take that symbolically.

[33:51] How about these passages? 1 Corinthians 15.50 and following and 1 Thessalonians 4.13 through 5.11 which are very key passages on eschatology and things.

These passages refer to the second coming of Jesus at the end of the age and the second resurrection of Revelation 20 which will be the general resurrection rather of both righteous and wicked.

So these passages are not referring to the church, referring to any particular time before a kingdom reign of Christ.

This is all future all the way to the end when Jesus comes the second time. 2 Thessalonians 2.1-12 which is probably the most familiar other than some of those passages in Revelation the most familiar end times prophecies in the New Testament.

And what do they say about it? These passages refer to the persecution of the last days. So it's all about that just before Christ comes.

[35 : 08] The restrainer is God who prevents the lawless one from rising to power before His appointed time. and who will His appointed time will be at the end of the age.

Alright? 2 Peter 3.1-13 and you can read these passages some of the time but these passages refer to the events of the time of the end including the apostasy and the bodily second coming of Christ and this is immediately followed by the new heaven and new earth which is the eternal state of all the righteous.

Alright? Weaknesses of the amillennial view. And I'm not going to name them all here but just some of the high spots.

Actually I consider these in this sense what are some of their biggest problems that they face. And the biggest one by far is Revelation 20.

and they just don't have a really good answer for the way the Bible describes a literal I mean it seems I mean if you just take it on its face value just looking at the text the Bible says a thousand years and they just can't other than to say that it's figurative that's just an interpretive decision all amillennialists struggle with Revelation 20.

[36 : 49] They don't have a good answer for it. That's their biggest problem. Their view requires an interpretation of the Revelation as a series of descriptions only.

So all that is said in the book of Revelation are just descriptions of things and not events occurring chronologically which if you read Revelation that's the most natural way to read it.

It happened a step at a time boom boom boom and rather their view is because it's apocalyptic it's cryptic in some ways and symbolic of things that is just a description of just a series of descriptions and not events given in chronological order.

Their non-literal approach or spiritualization in many places to the interpretation of biblical prophecy is a big problem. They seem resolute in their desire to use sound hermeneutics until it comes to eschatology.

When it comes to that then approach that differently. The amillennial view is pessimistic. I mentioned that. And why is it pessimistic?

[38 : 12] Because things are just progressively getting worse and worse and ends with the great apostasy and then the antichrist. Now it does end well, I mean obviously, Jesus does come, but their view of the age is pessimistic.

A number of Old Testament passages concerning Israel in the last days pose problems, a great deal of problems. And what's odd is that most amillennialists come from a reformed tradition, reformed theology position, and there's just so much in the Old Testament that highlights Israel's God's elect people, and he elected them for salvation.

and to kind of just push that aside and have that never really happening is a big problem for our millennialists.

What do they do with Israel? They have to, they have to just say that the church is Israel now. And it's awfully difficult. And again, if you're going to take a literal approach and say that the Bible means exactly what it means, and the true meaning is the obvious sense of the reading of it, then you have to say, well, how do you deal with that?

The amillennialists must make no distinction between Israel and the church. Their view must deny God's electing purposes toward Israel, which I've already said.